



ANG

Bayan

Pahayagan ng Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas  
Pinapatnubayan ng Marxismo-Leninismo-Maoismo

English edition  
Vol. XXXVIII No. 2  
January 21, 2007  
www.philippinerevolution.net

Editorial

## Resist and defeat Oplan Bantay Laya II

The fascist Arroyo regime launched Oplan Bantay Laya (OBL) II at the start of this year after the dismal failure of the Armed Forces of the Philippines' (AFP) previous five-year operational plan to crush the armed revolutionary movement and unarmed people's struggles.

The move betrays Arroyo's anxiousness in

the face of her growing isolation from the people and her desperation to cling to power.

OBL II is a continuation and an exacerbation of OBL I. Though shorter in duration, OBL II has more grandiose objectives. It intends to reduce the size of the New People's Army by half before the end of 2010 and thus gain strategic victory over the armed revolution.

OBL II will intensify all-out attacks against selected NPA guerrilla fronts, intensify terrorism against the revolutionary masses and step up the campaign of killings and repression against activists and progressive organizations and legal parties.

In the face of the enemy's intensifying fascist attacks, the Party has put forward as the entire revolutionary movement's central task for this tactical period the intensification of guerrilla warfare, the ouster of the fascist regime and the further expansion and strengthening of the

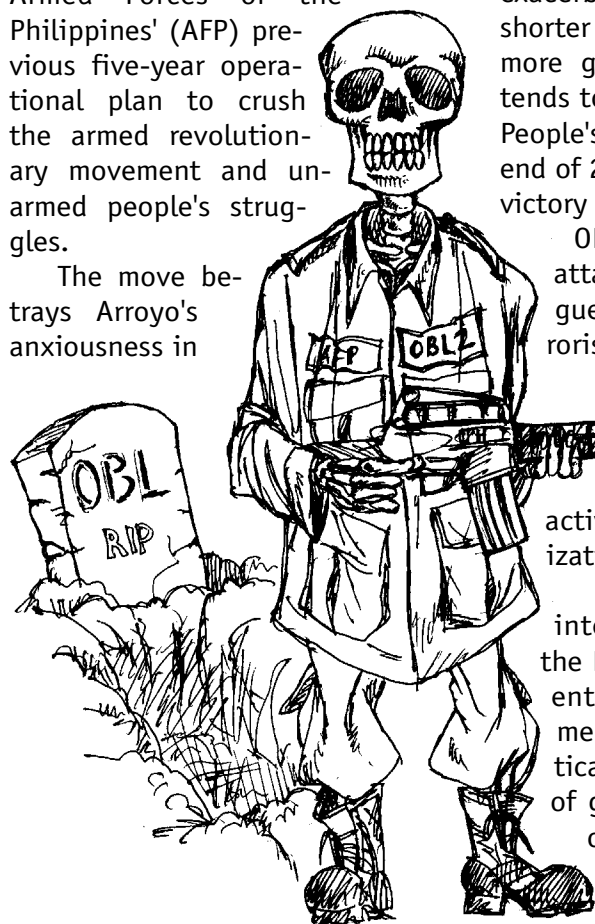
armed revolution.

The intensification of guerrilla warfare stands as the most urgent task in opposing and foiling the puppet fascist regime's terrorism and brutal attacks. It is the victories achieved in this area that will starkly demonstrate the inevitable failure of OBL II. Further gains in strength of the guerrilla forces and mass base lie greatly on the accomplishment of this task. It is a critical requisite for the intensification of various types of people's struggles towards the overthrow of the much-hated ruling regime.

We must inflict heavier blows on the fascist enemy more often than it could strike at the people's army. We must form more company-strength guerrilla fronts and more NPA combat platoons. We must launch more frequent tactical offensives in each region, province and front, especially in areas where the revolutionary forces are larger and stronger.

We must make sure to strike at the enemy in areas where it concentrates its attacks and sows fascist terror. We must ensure multiple body blows and many heavier head blows.

Victorious tactical offensives that deliver staggering head blows to the much despised regime have particular importance in the face of the aggravating crisis and intensified political battles in 2007.



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We must put more focus and effort on tactical offensives that have major political effect. We must grasp the fact that each tactical offensive and battle extends to a corresponding propaganda war. The NPA can seize and maintain the initiative in battle through numerous, frequent and extensive tactical offensives. On various levels and scales, this will throw into disarray, prevent and undermine if not completely bring to a halt the enemy's schemes and attacks.

Despite the enemy's all-out war and fascist viciousness, the Party, NPA and the revolutionary movement have concrete basis for declaring with utmost certainty that OBL II will fail and be revealed as nothing more than hot air.

The AFP deludes itself when it claims that by further concentrating its forces, it can crush within this year 24 of the more than 100 revolutionary guerrilla fronts nationwide. The enemy's forces are overstretched and sparse on the ground. The bulk of the AFP is tied down to various non-combat roles such as manning headquarters, providing security for Malacañang and ruling politicians and guarding

strategic installations and key infrastructure.

The enemy can deploy in the battlefield only a third of its 120,000 regular forces and a large number of these are focused on the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and Abu Sayyaf. At any one time, it can only deploy 30,000 troops against the NPA. The enemy hopes to augment this force with about 30,000 more paramilitary forces and the police which has lately been given a bigger role in military operations against the NPA. There is likewise a request for ten new battalions of regular forces and the redeployment of three battalions from Mindanao.

From the start, the AFP could only concentrate on not more than 12-15 guerrilla fronts at any given time, but has failed to crush even this limited number. The figure represents a mere 10% to 12% of 120 guerrilla fronts spanning thousands of villages throughout the country. The AFP is able to train its guns on even fewer villages in the country-

side nowadays because it deploys a significant part of its forces to conduct military operations in town centers and cities, including Metro Manila. The troops focus primarily on worker and urban poor communities that are bastions of the democratic mass movement.

Experience has shown us that even in guerrilla fronts under intense enemy attack, the NPA has been able to preserve its forces.

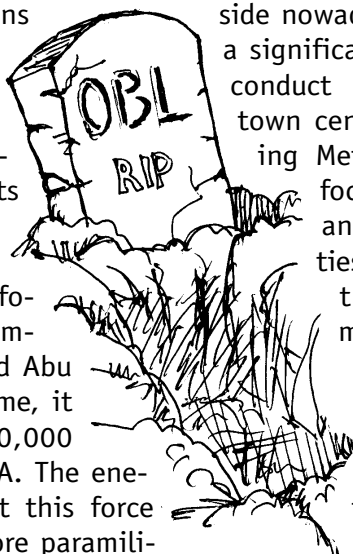
The people's army has creatively devised means to maintain a certain level of operations and strike back against the enemy even in areas where AFP forces are heavily concentrated.

The NPA has been able to expand, strengthen and continue with its activities. With the help of the people and the use of guerrilla tactics, the NPA has likewise been able to launch tactical offensives against the enemy in these areas.

Should the situation become untenable in the 10% of guerrilla fronts focused on by the AFP, the NPA can easily shift and gain momentum in the remaining 90% of its territory where enemy forces are weak and thinly spread.

Aside from its overstretched forces, the AFP's bigger problem is the widespread demoralization and disintegration of its forces, especially among junior officers and the rank and file. Factionalism and political rivalry, corruption and criminal activities are rife among generals and high-ranking military officers. This breeds rebellion in the ranks of the AFP.

EVEN in the midst of relentless battle, we must persevere in expanding and consolidating our forces, mass base and guerrilla fronts. Opportunities are excellent for the



Vol. XXXVIII No. 2 January 21, 2007

Ang Bayan is published in Pilipino, Bisaya, Iloko, Hiligaynon, Waray and English editions.

It is available for downloading at the Philippine Revolution Web Central located at:

[www.philippinerevolution.net](http://www.philippinerevolution.net)

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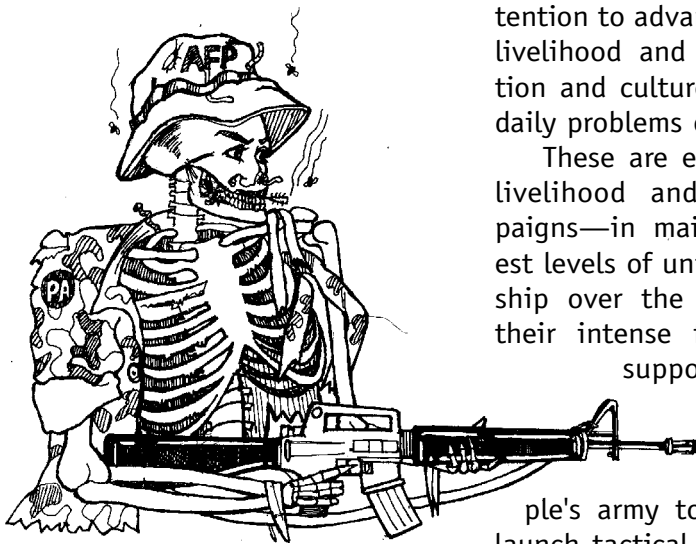
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Ang Bayan is published fortnightly

by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Philippines



NPA to organize the masses, recruit more Red fighters, establish local organs of revolutionary political power, respond to the needs of the masses and launch tactical offensives to seize weapons and weaken the enemy.

The intensification of armed struggle goes hand in glove with expanding and invigorating anti-feudal, antifascist and anti-imperialist mass struggles and campaigns. We must give thorough at-

tention to advancing campaigns for livelihood and production, education and culture, health and other daily problems of the masses.

These are essential—especially livelihood and production campaigns—in maintaining the highest levels of unity with and leadership over the masses, sustaining their intense fighting spirit and support for the armed

revolution and enhancing the capabilities of the people's army to be self-sufficient, launch tactical offensives and persist even in the midst of intense encirclement by the enemy.

We must persevere in expanding and strengthening unity and cooperation with all progressive, democratic and friendly forces even as we concentrate the heaviest blows on the puppet fascist Arroyo regime.

We must also ensure that provincial capitals and town centers adjacent to or around guerrilla fronts are strongly linked to, and

support, each other. This is crucial for intelligence work, propaganda, linkages with the middle forces, logistics, communication, launching tactical offensives and battling fascism and enemy attacks.

Expand and deepen the revolutionary underground movement in cities and town centers and foil the fascist plot to decapitate the Party and the revolutionary movement.

OBL II will inevitably fail because of the military's continually weakening capability to prop up the phony, lying, rotten, repressive and puppet Arroyo regime.

It is totally absurd for the AFP and its master Gloria Arroyo to declare that they could crush the revolutionary movement through military terrorism. They mistakenly think that they could make the people cower to their fascist brutality. The truth is that they all the more expose their character that is fascist and rotten to the core and all the more fan the flames of the people's struggle to end their vicious rule.

AB

## Intensifying military terrorism in Metro Manila

**A**FP troops have been openly prohibiting residents from supporting the activities of militant parties as militarization intensifies in various communities in Metro Manila. Such barefaced terrorism intends to strip progressive parties of their members and supporters and ensure their defeat in the coming election.

Following are some of the more striking cases:

**Manila.** An AFP unit deployed in Sta. Mesa since December 8 has been conducting regular patrols in communities along the railroad tracks from Pandacan to Sta. Mesa. There are nightly patrols in a barangay near the Polytechnic University of the Philippines (PUP). The soldiers have even made secret arrangements with university guards to be allowed entry into the campus to spy on progressive student organizations. On one occasion, the troops tried to break into the Gabriela Youth office inside the campus.

The AFP has likewise deployed 30-40 soldiers in Parola, Tondo since December 15 where they will remain until the election. The soldiers have searched the



house of a leader of a progressive organization in the locality and repeatedly threatened her. Many other cases of grave threats and intimidation have been reported.

At the Baseco Compound in Tondo, the AFP has been using troopers and former soldiers living in the

area to gather information on progressive mass organizations in the community.

The military has also detached a squad of soldiers to Isla Puting Bato in Tondo since the first week of December. Their presence in the area has caused tension, especially among residents who have fled from intense militarization in Samar and have settled in the community.

**Caloocan City.** A military battalion has been active in Tala, Camarin and Bagong Silang since the last week of November. Their main activity has been to conduct a house to house survey of progressive organizations in the locality and identify residents who attend mobilizations.

They have "visited" some leaders and members of the local Gabriela organization in their homes and threatened them. The soldiers have also painted and posted slogans stating "Oust NPA-Gabriela."

**Quezon City.** Three military squads have been permanently deployed in Barangay Commonwealth since November 27. Their specific targets are Gabriela leaders and members.

In Barangay Payatas, 20 soldiers have been deployed since the last week of November. They have repeatedly threatened leaders and members of progressive organizations in the area. There is also military presence in the barangays of Lupang Pangako, Batasan and Krus na Ligas.

**Makati.** Hundreds of soldiers registered at the local Comelec office in an apparent bid to boost votes for Arroyo and her allies in the city. Makati's local officials, especially its mayor Jejomar Binay, are known to be pillars of the oust Arroyo movement.

The people have actively strengthened their campaign for the pullout of military troops from Manila's urban poor communities in the face of all this. Members of the activist youth group Anakbayan in Lupang Pangako, for instance, launched a protest action last December 10 against unwarranted military presence in the community. Defying harassment and a blockade set up by soldiers, they went around the community to campaign for the military pullout. They remained unfazed even after two of their members were summoned by the military, detained and treated like common criminals. The residents of Lupang Pangako successfully secured the release of both detainees after launching a protest action.

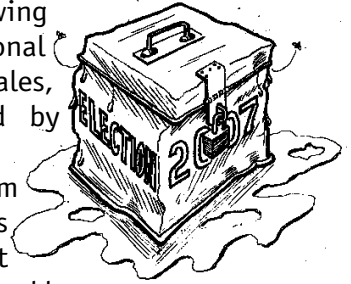
They also continually dialogue with barangay and city hall officials to air their grievances. **AB**

## BM scores AFP for no-vote call against partylist groups

Bayan Muna (BM) scored the AFP's call for the electorate not to vote for parties it has tagged as communist fronts. The call, issued by Maj. Michael Samson of the AFP Civil Relations Group following a similar call issued by National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales, was also roundly condemned by other partylist groups.

While Samson refrained from naming specific parties, it is clear that he meant militant parties like BM, Anakpawis, Anakbayan, Gabriela and Suara Bangsamoro that Gonzales wanted declared illegal in the 2004 election. The Comelec denied Gonzales' petition.

AFP chief of staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperon was forced to retract the call after BM threatened to charge the AFP for electioneering. **AB**



## DILG dismisses local anti-Arroyo officials

The Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) dismissed 13 local officials last January 15 as part of a barefaced Malacañang maneuver to tighten control over local governments before the May elections. All of the dismissed officials are members of the anti-Arroyo opposition.

Those dismissed were Pasay City Mayor Wenceslao Trinidad, his vice mayor and nine city councilors; Iloilo Governor Niel Tupas Sr.; and Jaen, Nueva Ecija Mayor Antonio Esquivel. Tupas is among the most prominent members of the opposition, being a national officer of the Liberal party's anti-Arroyo faction headed by Sen. Franklin Drilon.

The dismissals are arbitrary because the corruption cases filed against the local officials, which were used as basis for their ouster are all pending in court. The Arroyo regime demonstrated its hypocrisy with its refusal to dismiss its staunch ally Manila Mayor Lito Atienza despite the fact that he faces up to 17 corruption cases.

Meanwhile, the DILG ordered the six-month suspension of Batangas Governor Armand Sanchez. Although Sanchez belongs to the Arroyo camp, his suspension is a Malacañang maneuver to give way to Batangas Vice Governor Ricky Recto and Lipa City Mayor Vilma Santos-Recto and entice Sen. Ralph Recto into joining the Arroyo administration's senatorial ticket. **AB**

## Comelec promotes "Garci" men

Instead of having them investigated and punished, seven Comelec men close to Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano and implicated in the "Hello Garci" scandal have been promoted. The Arroyo regime's machinery for electoral fraud is evidently intact and ready for use in the coming May polls.

Those promoted to higher rank or transferred to more favorable positions are former Agusan del Sur provincial elections supervisor (PES) Francisco Pobe who is now assistant regional elections director (RED) for the entire Caraga region; former Western Mindanao

RED Henry Magbutay, now Northern Mindanao RED; former Lanao del Sur PES Atty. Rey Sumalipao, now Southern Mindanao assistant RED and acting RED for the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao; former Lanao del Sur vice chairman of the board of canvassers Renault "Boy" Macarambon, now division chief of the Comelec Election and Barangay Affairs Department (EBAD); former Davao Oriental PES Remlane Tambuang, now acting RED of Caraga; and former head of the board of canvassers in Cebu and now EBAD director Rogelio Benjamin. AB

## The grand coverup of Gloria Arroyo's role in the IMPSA extortion scandal

**E**vidence that Hernando 'Nani' Perez extorted \$2 million in exchange for the approval of the controversial Industrias Metalurgicas Pescarmona Sociedad Anonima (IMPSA) contract is as clear as day. IMPSA, an Argentine company, was contracted to repair the Caliraya-Botocan-Kalayaan (CBK) Power Complex in Laguna at a cost of \$470 million.

Such evidence was first unearthed during a longstanding investigation by the Swiss government of millions of dollars deposited by Perez and his wife Rosario in their Swiss bank accounts. Suspecting that the funds were laundered, the Swiss government has been requesting Philippine government assistance in the investigation since 2003. The Arroyo regime, however, has not responded and has instead instituted various maneuvers designed to muddle and eventually destroy the case.

The regime has recently been scrambling to revive the case because Gloria Arroyo is slated to attend the World Economic Forum meeting in Davos, Switzerland at the end of January. Swiss authorities will surely inquire about the progress of the case. Despite the

case's revival, however, Arroyo has ensured that Perez and his accomplices could easily weasel their way out, conceal evidence of their guilt and secure the spoils of their crime.

**The contract.** Before Joseph Estrada was booted from power, he had already signed a provisional contract with IMPSA for the CBK power project. The contract Estrada signed, however, did not include provisions for a sovereign guarantee of the loans to be incurred by IMPSA from international banks. Estrada was ousted before he could finalize the deal and collect his "commission." While the people were busy ousting Estrada, Arroyo and her cohorts were also busy extorting from IMPSA. Not surprisingly, on Arroyo's 18th day in power, she approved a sovereign guarantee clause on IMPSA's loans in exchange for a \$14 million bribe. Perez was then



Secretary of Justice for barely a week.

**How the bribe was paid.** Perez used then Estrada crony Mark Jimenez to collect his share of the IMPSA bribe. Jimenez was forced to agree after he was threatened with imprisonment for bribery for serving as intermediary between Estrada and IMPSA.

Perez collected \$2 million

through Jimenez. The Arroyo couple received \$7 million. The rest was divided among their accomplices.

Jimenez transferred the amount of \$1,999,965 initially deposited with the Trade and Commerce Bank in the Cayman Islands to the Coutts Bank in Hongkong under the account of Ernest Escaler, a businessman friend of Perez. Afterwards, Perez's wife Rosario and his brother-in-law Romeo Arceo opened separate accounts with the EFG Private Bank in Geneva, Switzerland on March 5, 2001. The next day, Escaler transferred the bulk of the funds from his Hongkong bank account to his, Rosario Perez's and Arceo's Swiss accounts.

It was Jimenez who likewise served as conduit for the Arroyo couple and their other accomplices' share in the booty.

News of the bribery first leaked out in November 2002. As Justice Secretary, Perez immediately processed Jimenez's extradition to the US to face criminal charges and prevent him from testifying before the Ombudsman. Perez eventually resigned from the DOJ to evade the accusations against him.

**Malacañang feigns innocence, obstructs the investigation.** Since 2004, the Arroyo regime has done nothing to advance the case and even ordered the extermination of the case against Perez. This triggered the resignation of then Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo.

The Ombudsman Field Investigation Office finally finished its investigation in November 2005 and recommended the investigation and filing of charges against the Perez couple, Arceo and Escaler for conspiracy to commit graft and corruption. The Arroyo couple and others who shared the bribe were excluded from the investigation and filing of charges.

Ombudsman Merceditas Gutierrez was compelled to file charges against Perez last January 8 because of Arroyo's approaching visit to Switzerland. But instead of filing plunder and money laundering charges, the Ombudsman charged Perez with the lighter case of extortion, thus also exempting Jimenez from being charged with bribery. AB



## Military actions in Northern Samar

Eleven enemy troops were killed and eleven others were wounded in three NPA harassment operations against various military units last December in Northern Samar. The harassment operations were launched in the midst of the AFP's intense fascist operations in the province. Eight other soldiers were killed and four more were wounded when the NPA wrested the initiative from attacking enemy troops. Meanwhile, two criminal elements were killed and three were wounded in an NPA punitive operation launched that same month.

In Barangay Trujillo, Bobon, a soldier was killed and two CAFGU elements were wounded last December 11 when NPA snipers fired upon a camp of the 20th IB. The sniping operation was launched in response to a request by the masses to punish the unit for harassing village folk. The 20th IB has banned peasants from staying in their fields and required them to give construction materials and render forced labor in building the soldiers' barracks.

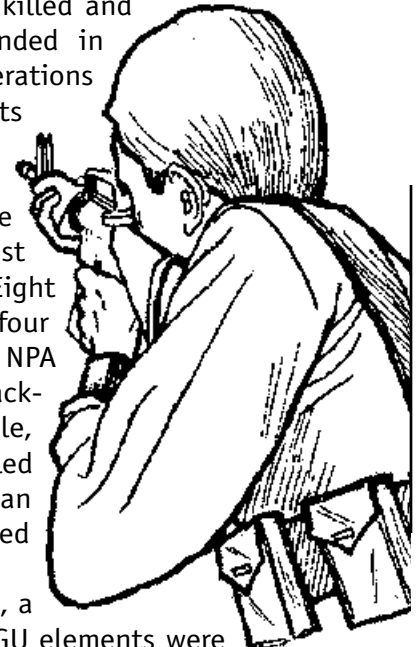
In Barangay San Pascual, Catarman, a soldier was killed and two others were wounded last December 7 when NPA snipers fired upon a camp of the 52nd IB.

Two 63rd IB troops conducting operations were killed and four others were wounded last December 1 in two NPA sniping operations between Barangays Taylor and Victory in Las Navas.

In Barangay Osmeña, Palapag, five soldiers were killed and two others were wounded last December 11 when an NPA unit on the defensive fought back. A Red fighter was martyred.

Elsewhere, in Barangay Guba, Bobon, two CAFGU elements were wounded last December 11 when eight NPA guerrillas encountered combined troops from the 20th IB and "B" CAA Cadre Coy of the 52nd IB. The NPA guerrillas safely withdrew.

Meanwhile, two elements of the "Dose Pares" gang were killed and three others were wounded in an NPA punitive operation in Barangay Kabungaan, Silvino Lobos last December. The Dose Pares is a criminal syndicate formed and armed by the military. AB



# Military abuses in Northern Samar

**M**ilitary abuses are rampant in the Northern Samar countryside, according to the latest reports from the province.

**December 11.** Soldiers left Zacarias Nobis, an hors de combat Party cadre, to die in the hot sun. Nobis, a guerrilla front secretary who had suffered a heart attack in Barangay Bagacay, Palapag, Northern Samar was being taken by boat to a hospital by unarmed civilians when they were fired upon by soldiers conducting military operations. Upon seeing the ailing Nobis left behind lying in the boat, the soldiers deliberately left him there and waited for him to die. The enemy later boasted that Nobis died in a raid on an NPA camp in the area.

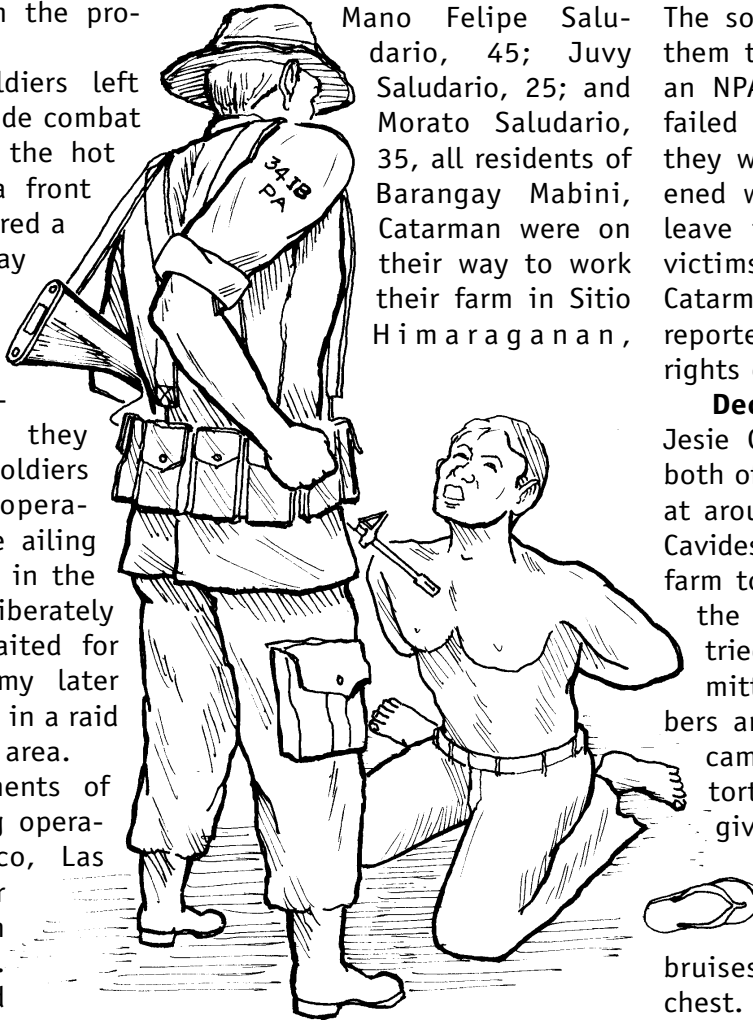
**December 8.** Elements of the 63rd IB conducting operations in San Francisco, Las Navas beat up farmer and village watchman Domingo Quimbo, 37. The soldiers vented their ire on him when he came to the rescue of his sister-in-law who was being manhandled by the military for refusing to unzip a bag she was carrying. The soldiers were forcing her to open the bag so they could plant documents that would incriminate Quimbo and his sister-in-law whom they accused of being NPA members. The mauling stopped only when villagers and barangay officials came to tell the soldiers that Quimbo was not an NPA guerrilla.

**December 7.** Soldiers from the

20th IB beat up three farmers they had accused of being NPA members. The victims Mano Felipe Saludario, 45; Juvy Saludario, 25; and Morato Saludario, 35, all residents of Barangay Mabini, Catarman were on their way to work their farm in Sitio Himaraganan,

Barangay E. Duran, Bobon when they were accosted by soldiers conducting military operations. The soldiers then started forcing them to pinpoint the location of an NPA camp. When the victims failed to give any information, they were beaten up and threatened with death if they did not leave their village. In fear, the victims evacuated towards the Catarman town center where they reported their ordeal to human rights groups.

**December 2.** Soldiers tortured Jesie Gudiaga and Juvy Cavides, both of Barangay Rizal, Las Navas, at around 9:00 a.m. Gudiaga and Cavides were on their way to their farm to plant rice when they met the soldiers. The troopers then tried to forced them into admitting they were NPA members and asked them where their camp was. The victims were tortured when they could not give out any information. Gudiaga suffered the brunt of the soldiers' brutality, sustaining wounds and bruises on his eyes, lips and chest.



## COURAGE official shot dead

**T**wo death squad elements shot dead Jose Maria Cui, 53, a professor at the University of Eastern Philippines in Catarman, Northern Samar and chairman of the Confederation for Unity, Recognition and Advancement of Government Employees (COURAGE) in the province. The two assassins barged into a classroom where Cui was giving an examination and shot him dead in front of his students. They escaped aboard a motorcycle. Cui also formerly chaired the Eastern Samar chapter of Katungod-Sinirangan Bisaya and was a member of Bayan Muna (BM). He is the 123rd BM member and the 820th activist killed since Gloria Arroyo took power in January 2001.

# A revolutionary and scientist for the people

**T**he Communist Party of the Philippines and the revolutionary movement pay tribute to Dr. Aloysius "Ochie" Baes who died of a heart ailment on December 21, 2006. Up to his dying day, Ka Ochie was a portrait of a true and diligent communist and people's scientist. He is a hero of the revolution and the Filipino people.

Since Comrade Ochie became politically conscious and joined the movement for national liberation and democracy as a student, he has devoted his entire life to the selfless cause of serving the people and the revolution. He made important contributions to the advancement of science and the protection of the environment for the people's interest.

He was a Chemistry teacher at the University of the Philippines in Los Baños when Marcos declared martial law. He resigned from the university, joined the people's army and served as a leading Party cadre in Southern Luzon. But he was captured and imprisoned before long. Comrade Ochie then became one of the leaders of political prisoners incarcerated at Camp Crame and led them in successful struggles to assert their rights.

Through the songs and poems of protest, hope and struggle that he composed and his encourage-

ment in developing cultural work among political prisoners, he made a major contribution to transforming prison into a wellspring of revolutionary and progressive cultural works. Their artistic creations strengthened the political prisoners' steadfastness and fighting spirit and inspired struggles within and outside prison.

Upon his release, Comrade Ochie went back to teaching. As a teacher, he encouraged his students, fellow professors and scientists to serve the people and use their scientific knowledge to advance the people's interests.

Taking up doctoral studies abroad, he continued his advocacy and raised support for the Philippine struggle.

Upon his return to the country, he devoted much of his time to contribute to the national democratic struggle, especially in the field of science and technology. He helped found AGHAM, an organiza-

tion of progressive Filipino scientists, as well as other progressive organizations advocating pro-people science. He was instrumental in identifying the five most important concerns that Filipino scientists should focus on to make science and technology serve the people: environmental protection; food security and self-sufficiency; public utilities for the people; developing a scientific and pro-people culture; and national industrialization. He likewise pointed out that it is the people themselves who are the principal movers of science and technology for the welfare of all.

He actively joined people's struggles against toxic waste, environmental destruction and the hazards to the life and health of the people caused by the defunct US military bases in Clark and Subic; by the Marcopper Mining Corporation and Placer Dome Corporation in Marinduque; by Lafayette Mining Limited in Rapu-Rapu, Albay; by the Petron oil spill in Guimaras Strait; by commercial logging which has caused floods and landslides in Leyte, Aurora, Quezon and Albay; and many others. As proof of his dedication to the people's welfare and struggle, even from his deathbed he discussed the problems wrought by pollution at Rapu-Rapu and what should be done about it.

Comrade Ochie will never be forgotten by the people with whom he stood side by side in their struggles. He fought for and made many major contributions to the effort to attain a new and better world for the Filipino people and all of humankind. He will continue to serve as an inspiration in the people's struggle.

AB

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# Bush's "new plan" in Iraq calls for more occupation troops

Since last year, there has been worldwide clamor for the US to end its war and occupation of Iraq. The American people have likewise demanded the repatriation of US troops as soon as possible even as American soldiers continued their rampage in Iraq. But US President George W. Bush has chosen to ignore all this in his "new plan." On January 10, he ordered the deployment to Iraq of an additional 21,500 troops and the allotment of \$6.8 billion more to fuel its war of aggression. He also required the puppet al-Maliki regime to cough up a counterpart \$10 billion for the plan.

Bush's "new plan" can only lead to the escalation of the war and even more terror, chaos and destruction in Iraq. It will only bury the US deeper in the quagmire that is Iraq and condemn it to suffer an even more ignominious military defeat.

Faced with growing criticism of successive losses and mounting US casualties in Iraq, Bush had promised last year to come up with a new plan. He declared his readiness to listen to recommendations even from leaders outside of the defense and military establishments and neoconservative

groups in a desperate attempt to regain the support of the American people.

The most publicized recommendations were those submitted by the Iraq Study Group (ISG), a committee composed of personalities from both the Republican and Democratic parties—the two leading political parties in the US.

Among the ISG's recommendations was the withdrawal of American troops from Iraq by 2008 and the retention of US forces embedded with Iraqi forces to train them and help in stabilizing the puppet regime. The ISG moreover recommended that the US settle its differences with Syria and Iran—countries that have both been supporting Iraqi rebels and considered by Bush to be enemies of the US—to get them to assist in efforts to stabilize the Iraqi government. The ISG recommendation was well within the framework of maintaining US power and interests in Iraq.

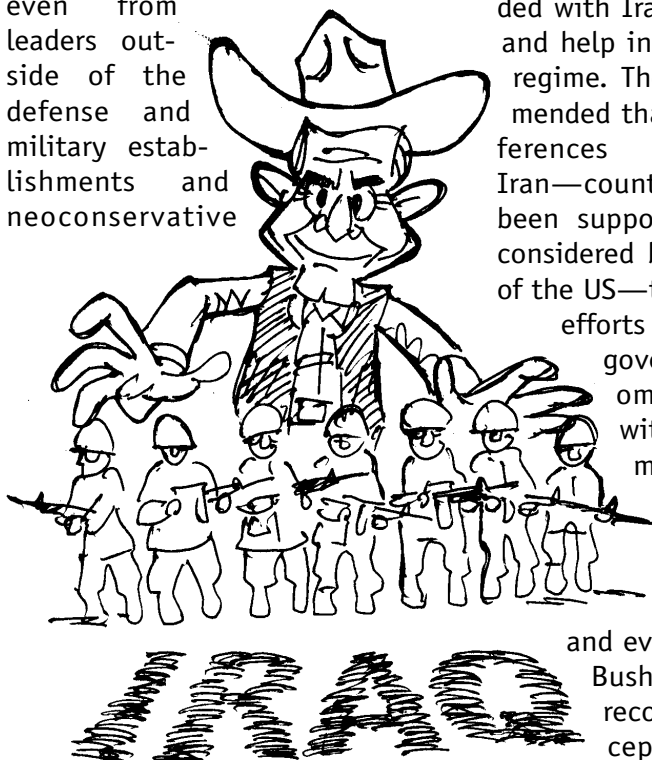
Against the advice of many of his fellow Republicans and even of his own generals, Bush brushed aside these recommendations, but accepted the need to

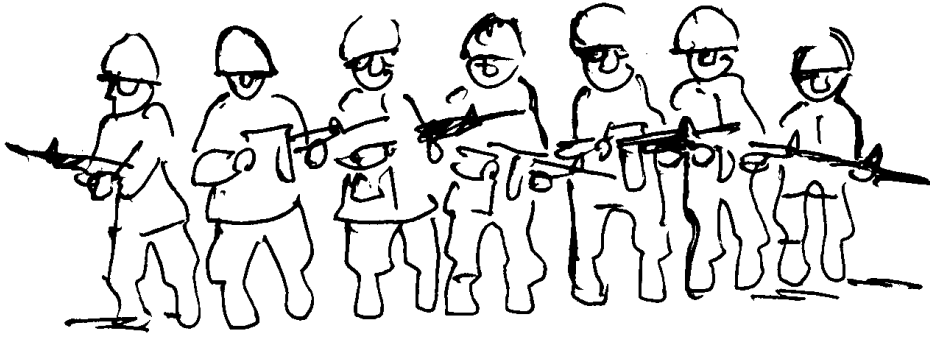
strengthen the puppet regime and armed forces in Iraq. Bush believed that the recommendations were incompatible with the military situation in Iraq. He said that the American soldiers' failure to crush the armed anti-occupation forces completely would merely lead to further anarchy and deeper divisions in the country.

Bush claims to have admitted committing strategic errors in Iraq. But he has refused to acknowledge that the US' decision to wage an illegal, unjust and immoral attack on Iraq and occupy it was fundamentally wrong. Neither has he stopped justifying the rape of Iraq's national sovereignty, the seizure of its oil resources and the largescale destruction and brutality wrought on the Iraqi people. He continues to rationalize all this with his "preemptive war" doctrine despite the fact that his accusations that Saddam Hussein harbored weapons of mass destruction and had links with al-Qaeda have been proven false.

Bush's "admission" has only served to justify his plans of further escalating US aggression in Iraq. Claiming an inadequate number of American troops in Iraq, he has ordered more troops brought in. He likewise complained about the US forces' limited movements in Iraq, saying they hampered the troops' ability to consolidate "cleared" areas, especially in the capital.

In accordance with his "new plan," 17,000 additional American troops will be deployed in Baghdad and its environs ostensibly because





more than 80% of Iraqi attacks in the past had targeted these areas. The US plans to concentrate efforts on the "Battle for Baghdad" to demonstrate to the American people and the world's peoples that through its control of the national capital, it has a chance of winning in Iraq. Four thousand troops will also be sent to Anbar province which the US claims to be an al-Qaeda stronghold.

Previous limitations on American troops movements will be lifted. US soldiers in the past stayed within their well-entrenched camps and went out only to conduct "clearing operations" (expelling anti-US elements from communities). They never conducted holding operations in an effort to avoid staying out of their camps for long periods. The task of patrolling communities and manning checkpoints were fulfilled by the weak puppet Iraqi forces. Thus, it was very easy for armed Iraqi fighters to return.

Bush's "new plan" calls for the accomplishment in Baghdad of the entire range of the "counter-insurgency" strategy of "clear-hold-build." This means that both American troops and the puppet armed forces will be maintaining their presence in Iraqi communities after every clearing operation.

Such clearing operations are brutal and barbaric. American

troops force the local population to submission at the point of a gun, especially since they do not speak the people's language. In an effort to tighten control over the movements of residents, holding operations by American occupation forces will become more violent and fascistic. Like the system of "hamletting" previously enforced by the US in Vietnam, Baghdad will be divided into 11 "sectors" where the movements of residents will be strictly limited and subject to surveillance. American troops will likewise be ordered to limit their interactions with locals, especially children, to avoid being monitored by the rebels. An ID system will be enforced for all, and everyone's entry to and exit from the "sectors" reported.

Aside from the fact that such measures are sure to fuel the people's hatred, they will only create a horde of vulnerabilities for the American troops. Concentrating on Baghdad and exposing themselves during patrols and holding operations will merely render them more vulnerable to rebel attacks. Meanwhile, passing on more responsibilities to the puppet regime and the puppet military and police in controlling vast areas outside of Baghdad and Anbar will make it easier for Iraqi rebels to operate in these places.

Bush's "new plan" relies heav-

ily on the ability of the puppet regime and the puppet military and police forces to keep pace with and cooperate with American forces. Local forces will be granted pay hikes in an effort to stem corruption, and will be given training to enable them to eventually take over the tasks currently being undertaken by the foreign troops. But it is highly doubtful whether the puppet Iraqi forces can ever be effective. They have been known to abscond with their newly drawn salaries and newly issued equipment and have often passed such equipment to various rebel groups.

The US can not rely on the inutile puppet al-Maliki regime. It is dependent on the Medhi Army, a militia force led by Muqtada al-Sadr that is far bigger and far stronger than the puppet army. It is independent and attacks American forces, puppet troops and rival Sunni Arabs.

Bush deludes himself into believing that the US could still salvage its occupation of Iraq through his "new plan." The plan merely postpones the inevitable collapse of whatever control the US and its puppet regime have over the country. It will sooner or later lead to the total breakdown of US rule in Iraq.

Attacks and acts of violence have already escalated in Baghdad, with the same expected to intensify all over Iraq. Despite differences among Shi-ites, Sunni Arabs and Kurds, their resistance to the US occupation of their country binds them to a common cause.

Bush's "new plan" has only succeeded in accelerating his regime's isolation within and outside the US. Great Britain, the

*Continued on "Iraq...", on page 11*

## Lawyers score VFA for creating privileged criminals

SIX lawyers led by former Sen. Jovito Salonga filed a petition before the Supreme Court to declare the RP-US Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) unconstitutional for its creation of a "privileged class among criminals."

Salonga and his co-petitioners said that in allowing the US to have custody of erring American soldiers, the VFA violates the constitutional provision on equal protection of the law as it treats American troops as a "class above all others."

"Nicole," the Filipino woman raped by Lance Corporal Daniel Smith in November 2005 had likewise filed an earlier petition before the Supreme Court to declare as illegal and unconstitutional the VFA provision that grants the US custody over accused American soldiers for the duration of the judicial process.

According to Nicole's lawyer, Atty. Evalyn Ursua, the term "all judicial processes" pertains to the entire process from the trial to the passing of judgment on the accused, based on Philippine law. She said that a convict remains guilty unless his conviction is overturned by a higher court, and must remain in Philippine custody.

Meanwhile, the CPP called for the immediate arrest of MSgt. Steve Saunders, an American soldier caught in violation of the election gun ban who beat up a Filipino in General Santos City on January 19. The CPP likewise urged Henry Araneta, a DZRH reporter, to sue Saunders for mauling him.

The CPP said this latest incident starkly demonstrates the contempt felt by American soldiers for Filipinos because they know they are beyond the reach of local laws. Saunders is part of a US "humanitarian force" currently based in Mindanao. As expected, Saunders is now in the custody of the US military despite his crime.

## ASEAN Summit delegates ink "anti-terrorist" convention

TEN leaders of member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) signed January 12 the ASEAN Convention on Counterterrorism (ACCT), formally integrating countries within the regional body into the Bush regime's repressive "war against terrorism". The signing of the agreement formed part of the activities of the ASEAN Summit held January 10-13 in Cebu City.

The ACCT was among the points in the ASEAN Summit's agenda zealously pushed by the US. The convention calls for greater cooperation among ASEAN regimes in sharing intelligence information, monitoring travelers and tightening controls over borders. It also facilitates the process of pursuing and extraditing suspected terrorists. ASEAN member states are expected to enact their own repressive laws in accordance with the recently signed "anti-terrorist" accord.

To expedite the signing of the agreement, the Arroyo regime engineered a series of bombings in Mindanao a few days before the pact was to be signed at the ASEAN Summit. Up to seven people died and 40 wounded in the bombings that took place in the cities of Cotabato, Gen. Santos and Kidapawan on January 10.

The bombings, which the Arroyo government quickly blamed on the MILF and Abu Sayyaf, was likewise a dramatic message by the US and its puppet Arroyo regime to the Senate to pass the "anti-terror bill" now pending in its chambers.

### *"Iraq..." from page 10*

Bush regime's closest ally in its war against Iraq has already refused to support the infusion of more troops and the escalation of the Iraqi war.

Within the US, more and more

American people are opposed to Bush's "new plan" in Iraq. Surveys indicate that up to 85% of the American people are in favor of bringing home US troops in Iraq, if not immediately, then within the year. The majority of US senators and congressmen are against

Bush's "new plan," with opposition crossing party lines. The US Senate is in fact preparing legislation that would oblige Bush to secure approval from both Congress and the Senate before he could send additional troops anywhere in the world.

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